

# **COMMANDER'S INTENT: Its Evolution in the United States Army**

A Monograph  
By  
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### Abstract

COMMANDER'S INTENT: ITS EVOLUTION IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY by LTC J.S. Patterson, USA, 83 pages.

This monograph examines the origins of the concept of conveying the intentions of the commander to subordinates from its initial appearance in Army doctrine in 1905 until the present day. While many believe they understand the genesis of this concept, this review of doctrine and professional writings from 1897 until the present, demonstrates how different generations of Army leaders have used the same concept in different environments.

By examination of the history of the concept today referred to as commander's intent, this monograph shows how doctrine in general evolves and matures in the Army. This is relevant as the Army moves into a new century, and seeks to determine a doctrine appropriate for the time. By comparing the situation the Army faced at the dawn of the last century, and following the maturation of the concept of commander's intent, this monograph demonstrates that doctrinal concepts are fundamentally applicable over time, and that the more we may think we change as an institution; the more we stay the same.



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## I. Introduction

...From the mind of the commander a dominating concept of the operation  
must emerge...<sup>1</sup>

Since 1982 a debate has taken place within the United States Army.<sup>2</sup> This debate focuses on defining and applying the doctrinal concept we know today as commander's intent. A product of the debate is a general perception within the Army that an operation order at any level is incomplete without a specific articulation of what the commander intends to do. Intent statements are scrutinized during formal evaluations as a starting point to praise success or to assess blame for failure. Manual upon manual defines intent. Yet, a standard definition accepted within the Army is conspicuously absent.<sup>3</sup> If commander's intent were a recent doctrinal innovation, as many believe,<sup>4</sup> the inability to produce a comprehensive definition might be justified. However, that is not the case. The expression of intentions has been a part of Army doctrine since 1905 when it was first written down!<sup>5</sup>

Because the concept has been in Army doctrine so long, the recent debate regarding commander's intent is puzzling. Since there appears to be real consensus as to the importance of understanding the intentions of the commander, why do so many believe its formal expression is a recent innovation? Perhaps, the answer lies in the history of the concept itself. It is probable that the value of commander's intent to modern commanders can be seen more clearly by examining the history of the concept itself. This history depicts a journey. It is

the journey of both a concept and an army. As the concept matures, the Army changes from a small, constabulary force into a modern expeditionary army, and ultimately into the most powerful army on the planet. Conclusions about this journey, and their implications for the future, can best be developed by answering the question: How did the idea of commander's intent originate and mature in the published doctrine of the Army?

Before beginning the examination, a succinct definition of the concept is required. For the purpose of this study, the view of commander's intent as merely an expression of guidance located in an operations order is too narrow. Instead, the term, as used here, connotes an expression of a cognitive process. Specifically, it is a process commanders apply to formulate their overall concept of the operation. It is their mental picture of a set of actions,<sup>6</sup> from preparation of the plan, to the conclusion of combat operations, that fits all the working parts together in a construct designed to impose the commander's will upon an adversary.<sup>7</sup> This process results in the transformation of an abstract idea into clear, discernible guidance for subordinates. The expression of this guidance results in what we know today as the commander's intent.

As a guidepost to explore the history of commander's intent, it will be helpful to develop a common analytical framework. Six questions form the structure of this framework: Where did Army professionals find a requirement to define their intentions? Who should develop and express their intentions and why? What content is required for an adequate expression of intentions? How

and when are intentions disseminated? Who is the recipient of these intentions? Finally, what do subordinates do with intentions when they get them? The answers to these questions will support conclusions about the relevance of intent to future warfare, as well as increase the collective understanding of why this concept has remained a part of Army doctrine for almost a century.

## **II. The Origins of Intent (1870-1910)**

...it is absolutely necessary that the subordinate headquarters perceive the object of what has been ordered to enable them to attain that object even when conditions make it necessary to act differently than laid down in orders...<sup>8</sup>

The expression of intentions in orders is not an American innovation. While the exact genesis of the concept remains unknown, conveying intentions has been a part of the orders process in the German Army since the late 19th Century.<sup>9</sup> It was the success of the Prussians in the late 19th Century that sparked the interest of U.S. Army leaders.<sup>10</sup> As interest in the Germans grew, the U.S. Army began to rely less and less on the French Army for its doctrine.<sup>11</sup> It is probable that the idea of conveying intentions in orders was prompted by detailed study of the German military.

The study of the Germans probably began in earnest in 1871-72 when General William T. Sherman, General in Chief of the Army, made an official visit to Europe. Sherman was interested in the way the Germans had utilized scientific study and their emerging general staff to win victories in 1864, 1866,

and 1870-71. While he was impressed by the sense of individuality displayed by the German soldier, Sherman viewed the German system as worthy of consideration, but not wholesale adoption. In 1876, Emory Upton made a follow-up visit to Europe. Upton spent much of his time studying the so called Prussian staff system. As a result of both visits, the Prussian staff system became the focus of further study in the Army.<sup>12</sup>

American study focused primarily on four German military writers; Helmut von Moltke, Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, Hans von Kiesling, and Otto F.W.T. Griepenkerl.<sup>13</sup> Moltke was seen as the architect of the Prussian success against the French. His writings provided insights into strategy formulation. Greipenkerl's writing provided the basis for what would become the standard format for orders in the American Army. Kiesling's work offered instructions on how to write orders and became the basis for subsequent similar books by American authors. Von der Goltz wrote about the execution of orders.

Examining what the Germans were writing and the Americans were reading in the late 19th Century, provides insight into the process required to formulate and subsequently articulate a commanders' intentions. First, the intentions of the senior commander guided all operations. The senior commander analyzed the enemy situation and developed a general plan that provided a flexible response to the enemy's reaction to his plan. Higher commander's intentions were provided to subordinate headquarters based on need and security considerations. German commanders felt the battle could change dramatically in

a short time and too much knowledge of the commander's overall intentions might distract subordinates' execution of changes, or imperil morale. Finally, success hinged on the ability of the commander to express his concept. The Germans recognized that a good plan is worthless if no one understands it.<sup>14</sup> Various U.S. Army officers used these ideas to develop what would become the official doctrine of the American Army.

The early doctrine of the Army had its roots in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, at the School of Application for Infantry and Cavalry. American authors took the thoughts of the Germans and "Americanized" them. That is, following the accepted convention of the day, they took a German concept, wrote it as if were an original idea, and used an American experience, normally from the Civil War, to illustrate it.<sup>15</sup>

Two individuals made significant contributions to the emerging doctrine of the Army, and particularly the growth of the concept of intent; Eben Swift and Arthur L. Wagner. Wagner, called the Sylvanus Thayer of the General Service Schools, was given credit for much of the success the Army enjoyed in World War I.<sup>16</sup> The less cerebral, Eben Swift, using Greipenkerl's work as a model, was the architect of the five-paragraph field order still in use today.<sup>17</sup> It was in the course of explaining the orders format that Swift articulated the importance of conveying intentions to subordinates.<sup>18</sup>

Examining Swift's key points illustrates the process of "Americanization," as well as indicating what the Americans saw as important in

what they were learning from the Germans. First, Swift clearly saw the need for the Army in the field to be under the central direction of a single, supreme commander. By developing and conveying his intentions before the battle, and updating them as required thereafter, the supreme commander provided clear, unambiguous guidance to every subordinate organization. This direction ensured a common purpose regardless of the operating level. Second, intentions conveyed the commander's vision. Not a condensed version, but an explanation that was as detailed as necessary, because a statement of intentions was not viewed as a part of the five-paragraph field order. Intentions were articulated in a letter of instruction.<sup>19</sup>

The letter of instruction was the military artist's palette from which he could create and describe a plan. It had been the basis for written orders at least since the Battle of Rocroi in 1643.<sup>20</sup> The letter of instruction was an instrument the commander used to express his will and the object of operations to subordinates. It had no standard format. This allowed the commander to vary the contents as he desired based on his analysis of the situation and the information he deemed subordinates required to accomplish his goals. The commander conveyed the broad vision of his plan of action to subordinates in the letter of instruction. In contrast, the field order was expected to control and coordinate troops directly in battle in accordance with the tactical necessities. It did not contain an explanation of the commander's intentions. It provided succinct instructions that were expected to be executed with little modification. In present

day terminology, intentions were conveyed at operational and strategic levels, but were not seen as necessary at the tactical level.

While Swift and others articulated these ideas in books and journals, there was no formal written doctrine in the way we know it today. Doctrine, as common practice, did exist. However, it was often the result of the independent writing of junior officers that appeared in professional journals.<sup>21</sup> Eben Swift was an excellent example of these authors, and the quality of the articles they wrote. In a series of articles written in 1897, Swift articulated both the concept of intentions and his format for writing orders. The most prominent of these articles, "The Lyceum at Fort Agawam," grew out of the lectures he gave at Fort Leavenworth in 1894 while a member of the faculty.<sup>22</sup>

The formal codification of Army doctrine was a result of the Root Reforms. The Army published its first formal doctrine in the Field Service Regulations in 1905. The manual's discussion of operations orders, the letter of instruction, and the process of conveying intentions, reads like an expanded version of "The Lyceum at Fort Agawam." It perpetuates the German heritage as well as adding a new twist. The key addition was the naming of the order's paragraphs. Paragraph 2 was entitled, 'Intentions of the Commanding Officer.' However, the Field Service Regulations dictated that the basic order format was only for use at the tactical level. Commanders of organizations larger than divisions would use the written or telegraphic order based on the letter of instruction.<sup>23</sup>



At division level and higher, staff officers were extremely important. Commanders would issue letters of instruction, written in some cases by the staff. Just before the battle, commanders were to position themselves at a central point of the battlefield. If their command was dispersed, so they could not maintain effective personal control, the commander was to position staff officers at key locations throughout the battlefield. As the tactical situation changed, these staff officers would evaluate what was happening and issue orders in the name of the commander reflecting the changing situation. This system overcame many of the problems associated with the lack of rapid communications between commanders. In order for this process to be effective, staff officers had to understand thoroughly the intentions of the commander to avoid disaster.<sup>24</sup>

The system of positioning staff officers at key locations could also help overcome one of the more serious problems both Swift and the Germans had observed--poorly written orders. They believed writing orders was a special art. Unfortunately, orders written to convey the best ideas and plans were sometimes unable to convey clearly the intentions of the commander. It was probably Swift's desire to ensure clarity that caused him to hone in on the staff process more than had Moltke. In 1906, Swift wrote that no subordinate except the staff need be informed of the commander's future intentions. That implied that commanders needed information at the beginning that would enable them to conduct a specific operation. However, information about subsequent operations would remain the purview of the senior commander and his staff officers. This is

significant because it began the Army's debate about how much information subordinates need.<sup>25</sup>

Regardless of his minor departure from Moltke's original concepts, Swift was still a major contributor to the Army of the future. Although he did not devise the concept of intentions, Swift did introduce it to the American Army. Just as Wagner received credit for the Army's performance in World War I, Swift's influence was felt in both world wars. Not only was his order format adopted, so was his system of conveying intentions.

Despite the fact that Eben Swift was the primary American thinker and writer about intentions, there is no question that the requirement for defining intentions came from the Germans. Although the concept was "Americanized" by Swift using Civil War examples, in many cases, his explanations were identical to those used by Moltke. Conveying intentions, and understanding them, was clearly an essential part of the orders process. The requirement to provide intentions was formally prescribed in the 1905 Field Service Regulations and in the manual Swift wrote, Field Orders, Messages, and Reports in 1906.

There was agreement between the Americans and the Germans as to who expressed their intentions. Either the "supreme authority" in the American view,<sup>26</sup> or the "Highest Headquarters" in the German view,<sup>27</sup> provided his intentions to subordinates. It is probable this focus on the highest commander was based on the ability of that commander to see the entire problem, and that the actions of all subordinates had to contribute to the accomplishment of that commander's plan.

Since no other commander could have the same sense of the battle, his plan governed the overall conduct of operations. All actions on the battlefields of the 19th Century were dedicated to accomplishing the intentions of a single commander.<sup>28</sup>

Swift did not specify what should be contained in the intentions statement. He asserted that it should be clear enough to ensure subordinates understood the object upon which they were to focus, but should not impinge on their personal initiative. The senior commander was never to describe how the object would be attained. Swift's constant focus was to allow subordinates the ability to carry out the commander's intentions utilizing their initiative in determining the best way to do their mission. He believed that subordinates on the ground had the best perspective for determining specific combat actions.<sup>29</sup>

The Americans saw a statement of intentions as required before operations and then, as the situation changed, intentions should be updated in person, through staff officers, or through messages.<sup>30</sup> This was part of the thinking behind placing staff officers at key points on the battlefield. While the commander may not have personally updated his intentions, his staff did it for him based on their understanding of his overall vision.

While the Germans determined who should receive the commander's intentions based upon a desire to maintain operational security, the Americans never expressed any concern over limiting subordinate knowledge of intentions because of security concerns. However, Swift's ultimate guidance left the

commander's staff as the only recipients of intentions.<sup>31</sup> The Germans had restricted dissemination of intentions to levels that needed it, or a portion of the command that had to understand the intentions of the highest headquarters to accomplish their mission.<sup>32</sup> Swift did not explain why he modified this perspective on who should receive the commander's intent. It is odd this change occurred just as the telephone was appearing in society, and communications between commanders would shortly improve beyond anyone's imagination when the 1906 Field Orders, Messages, and Reports was published. However, because the staff was to be located at key headquarters throughout the battle area, it can be argued that Swift's concept provided intentions at the locations where they could be most effective. From these key positions, staff officers could provide direction that would allow units to react to changes created by the ebb and flow of the battle while retaining the focus outlined in the commander's intentions.

### **III. World War I (1914-1918)**

Personal conferences between higher commanders and their subordinates who are to execute their orders may at times be advisable, in order that the latter may arrive at a correct understanding of the plans and intentions of their superiors and may correctly interpret the orders issued.<sup>33</sup>

As the U.S. Army moved toward entry in the First World War, it was far from the premier army of the world. In fact, it was thought to be an inferior organization by the European armies that would soon court it for assistance. Despite protests from the Army's leadership to the contrary, much of the criticism from

the Europeans was well deserved. Through 1916, during the harshest fighting of World War I, the American Army maintained a duty routine that was normally over by noon. Some officers did spend their free time in professional development, but others whiled away the hours in card games and other non-professional pursuits.<sup>34</sup>

The pre-World War I Army had a split personality of sorts. Its junior officers were more likely to engage in intellectual pursuits than were their seniors. The young officers were the primary force behind the new doctrine that looked to the future. Many of them, like Swift and Wagner, had spent a great deal of their careers educating the officers who would become the nucleus of the World War I Army. This contrasts with the senior leadership, many of whom were still oriented toward the 19th Century. This disparity of views gave impetus to the disparaging view the Europeans took toward the American Army. This changing Army would soon fight a major war that would test the viability of its new command doctrine.<sup>35</sup>

The Army imparted its new doctrine to rising officers at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Now utilizing a two year curriculum to train its best officers, the men who would be known as the best and the brightest of the next two world wars were trained there. Their training was focused on solving tactical problems with the help of German textbooks and topographical maps. They also studied what we know today as the orders process.<sup>36</sup>

At Leavenworth, student officers wrote practice order after practice order.

In the early days of the century, the orders were critiqued more on overall content than style.<sup>37</sup> Several books and articles were published on the technique of writing orders. These publications furthered the debate begun by Eben Swift regarding how much of the commander's future plans should be conveyed to subordinates in his intentions. G.E. Thorne wrote in 1906, "You must consider what amount of information must be given to subordinate commanders to ensure their working in accordance with your intentions."<sup>38</sup> The 1914 Field Service Regulations substituted the word *plans* for *intentions* when it spoke of communicating the commander's will to subordinates.<sup>39</sup> In 1916 Harry G. Bishop wrote a book exclusively devoted to writing orders. His spin on intentions, as the Army began to think about European trench warfare, was, "the object of field orders is to bring about a course of action in accordance with the intention of the leader...by ensuring cooperation of the various elements of the command in the execution of the mission...[T]he order...should...be unmistakable and unequivocal and express fully the decision of the commander."<sup>40</sup> In addition to personal publications, the Army revised the Field Service Regulations five times between their original publication in 1905 and July 1918. There was little that changed except the focus on trench warfare instead of maneuver warfare. One area regarding intentions which remained prominent was the exhortation not to plan too far in advance.<sup>41</sup>

In 1918, William A. Gano published The English of Military Communication. In this work he put forth the narrow view of the orders process that ap-

pears to be the intellectual antecedent of the Army's emphasis on control. In explaining the use of the order Swift developed, Ganoe said, "We must see that nothing enters the [order's] paragraph or subparagraph but that which belongs in the topic assigned."<sup>42</sup> Ganoe's work supported Swift's concept that the conveying of intentions was reserved for higher commanders and was to be articulated in the letter of instruction. To Ganoe, the letter of instruction dealt mainly with strategic considerations and general plans. The only thing new, since "The Lyceum at Fort Agawam," was the specific mention of field army commanders. Ganoe's work retained Swift's concept that intentions will change over the course of a battle and must be updated and shared with subordinate commanders. It was his opinion that by providing subordinates with information about future intentions, the commander ensured thorough cooperation by all elements of his command.<sup>43</sup>

By the time the Army entered World War I, its officers had completed the second phase of what Ganoe later called the renaissance of the Army.<sup>44</sup> The Army tested what it had learned during that intellectual transformation, on the battlefields of Europe.

During the war, the lower the echelon that produced an order, the more likely it was to use the Swift format. These orders were brief and to the point. In keeping with current doctrine, a statement of intentions is absent. Swift had also modified the format of the order. Paragraph 2 became 'Mission of the Command,' or 'Plan of the Commander,' although in practice the paragraphs did not use the titles.<sup>45</sup>

At Chaumont, and the other senior allied headquarters, the letter of instruction was the format used to convey direction. From these orders the intentions of the senior leadership could be gleaned. For example, in November 1918, for the St. Mihiel battle, Pershing's order, in letter of instruction format, stated: "It is desired that in carrying out the directions that are outlined herein, corps and division commanders push troops forward wherever resistance is broken, without regard for fixed objectives and without fear for their flanks.... The complete destruction of the enemy's armed forces is the immediate result sought for."<sup>46</sup> Pershing's desired end state is clear. What field commander's should orient on, the enemy, is also clear.

Orienting commanders is one thing; maintaining their focus is quite another. One of Pershing's major concerns during the war was communications between echelons of command. He remembered, "It was difficult to get units to do what you wanted them to do at a specific time and to find out promptly whether or not they had carried out their mission." Despite the use of the telephone, communicating intentions was no easier in World War I than it had been on any previous battlefield. Part of the blame for the dilemma was probably Pershing himself. During the Meuse-Argonne offensive, he was criticized by Marshal Petain's headquarters for poor staff work that packed too many divisions in a small maneuver area, and created significant problems in getting supplies to the front. No matter how well his subordinates may have understood Pershing's intentions, the battlefield had now become too large for the supreme commander,



or his staff, to move quickly from unit to unit personally updating instructions. The telephone provided some help, but was not reliable enough, and could not be used in the offense. Recognizing this dilemma, Pershing reorganized the A.E.F. Now he had only to deal with two fighting army commanders and his chief logistician in communicating his intentions. The battlefield had been made more manageable.<sup>47</sup>

By the end of the war, the requirement to provide intentions was clearly documented in Army doctrine. The Field Service Regulations had maintained the requirement, as had every book published about the orders process. It is also worthy of note that each publication that wrote about intentions used exactly the same wording. It is likely the intentions of the army commander were always clear at the beginning of the battle.

Who should provide intentions became more specific as the war progressed. Ganoë's 1918 book prescribed the army commander, General Pershing, as having responsibility for conveying his intentions to field army commanders. The goal of providing intentions was to ensure "thorough cooperation" during operations, as well as ensuring everyone understood the overall plan.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to being more specific about who disseminated their intentions, what should be in these strategic directions was also made clearer. The army commander was required to provide the immediate goal of the operation, and also his future plans.<sup>49</sup> The army commander's intentions were also provided before the battle. Army doctrine recognized that the increased lethality of the

European battlefield, as well as the size of the forces engaged, precluded abrupt changes in orders. The army commander had the choice of placing his intentions in the letter of instruction or conveying them in person.<sup>50</sup> As we have seen, Pershing placed them in his orders.

Once subordinate commanders had received the intentions of the army commander, they were obligated to act. Doctrine put the burden squarely on their shoulders when it stated, "Commanders of subordinate units cannot plead absence of orders or non-receipt of orders as an excuse for inactivity in a situation where action on their part is desirable, or where a change in the situation upon which the orders issued were based renders such orders impracticable or impossible of execution. If the subordinate commander knows what the general plan-the end in view-is, lack of initiative on his part is inexcusable."<sup>51</sup> Although the Army recognized the battlefield was constrained by trench warfare,<sup>52</sup> commanders were still expected to show an aggressive spirit if the opportunity presented itself.

#### **IV. The Inter-War Years (1919-1941)**

Whenever knowledge of his intentions is necessary to insure [sic] the cooperation of the units engaged, a commander does not hesitate to disclose them to all concerned.<sup>53</sup>

How orders could be misunderstood, or why commanders failed to execute orders properly, was the subject of a great deal of the writing following the war. The 1920s saw an explosion of articles in the U.S. and Europe. It was generally thought that practically all the good World War I orders followed the Ger-

man doctrine. It fell to the General Staff and Service Schools to select the best methods for writing orders.<sup>54</sup>

At Fort Leavenworth, Herbert Brees wrote about the orders process. His book, Combat Orders, became the text used in teaching how to compose orders. Many of the orders written in World War II came from the examples and instruction in his book. Brees' comments are important for understanding how the post-World War I Army thought about intentions.

The preparation of field orders...is an art that cannot be acquired overnight...The finest decision and tactical plan are of little value unless followed by clear and definite orders...Their objects are to bring about a course of action, In accordance with the *intention* [emphasis added] of the leader, suited to the situation to insure full co-operation [sic] between all arms and services...The amount of detail in any order depends upon the composition and size of the force...the larger the force the more general, the smaller the force the more detailed the orders...[A] properly written field order is brief and to the point... It is so plain that the recipients obtain a clear mental picture of the plans and *intentions* [emphasis added] of the commander who issues it...[The field order] is the expression of the decision and will of the commander...[It] sets forth the tactical plan of action and missions decided upon and such details as to the method of execution as will insure co-ordinated [sic] action by the whole command...A field order is faulty if it does not convey to the recipient the meaning and intention of the author...Field orders should not attempt to arrange matters too far in advance...[as] changes injure morale and are apt to impose unnecessary hardship on the command...*The rule is to give sufficient [detail] to make the plan clear and insure teamplay; to give to each subordinate a general understanding of the whole and a picture of the part he is to play* [emphasis added].... As a general rule, the field orders of armies, corps and divisions are written; those of brigades or regiments written or dictated, and those of lower units, dictated or verbal.<sup>55</sup>

This passage encapsulates most of the lessons the Army learned in World War I. Most important, it changes the way the Army would view intentions for-

ever. No longer were intentions the sole domain of the highest commander, to be disseminated to the immediate subordinate echelon. Every echelon was entitled to know and understand the big picture. Brees maintains the edict to look ahead in small bits of time, but the Army was in the process of clarifying who should take a long range, strategic view.

In 1930, the Army published a new manual, FM 100-15: Manual for Large Units. It was a, "guide for commanders and staffs of divisions, corps, armies, and groups of armies and for general headquarters." It retained the ideas of Eben Swift and the Germans on keeping the staff and subordinate commanders informed of the ultimate aim of the command. The commander's conceptualization of the battle was supposed to be understood throughout the command by every soldier.<sup>56</sup> The importance of conveying intentions was also a part of the doctrine published in 1936. In the Command and General Staff School's text, Combat Orders, students were told, "commanders keep their subordinates informed of their intentions and anticipated action to meet various contingencies."<sup>57</sup>

What was new in this manual, and in the thinking of the Army, was how and when to convey intent.

The Army recognized that, on the modern, mobile battlefield, the situation would be in a constant flux. The Army needed a system that ensured flexibility. This required the Army to formalize the obligation of commanders to supervise the execution of orders by means of the conferences and visits to the front that Swift had articulated. These visits promoted mutual understanding of the com-

mander's intentions and ensured there were no obscure points. As the situation changed, commanders could ensure subordinates' intentions were within the general framework of their still higher commander. The Army recognized that personal, face to face communication, not a written order, was the best way to communicate intentions in a rapidly changing situation. The need for written orders still existed, and doctrine urged orders writers to prepare them based on the understanding at least one person would read them and try to misunderstand them.<sup>58</sup>

To further reduce misunderstanding, the Army codified the work of the Command and General Staff School when it published FM 100-5: Operations (Tentative) in 1939. This manual stressed personal conferences between higher commanders and subordinates to ensure a, "correct understanding of the plans and intentions," of the commander and to, "correctly interpret the orders issued."<sup>59</sup> This manual also emphasized that intentions were conveyed through letters of instruction from the higher commanders to subordinates who used Swift's format for their orders. Intentions represented a long term vision that was part of the strategic picture conveyed by the letter of instruction. Also remaining in doctrine was the apparent paranoia about giving too much information about the future to subordinates. Commanders were urged to limit dissemination of intentions unless knowledge of those intentions was essential to ensure cooperation of units.

In 1941, the Army updated FM 100-5. It was the manual the Army used to fight most of World War II. It contained many of Swift's original phrases and added a new twist to the issue of control and the flexibility of intentions. The

manual exhorts the commander to keep from “regulating matters too far in the future” because that causes frequent changes. At the same time, it tells commanders to ensure that there is “no doubt as to what the commander wants.” It states that intentions should be disseminated to the units engaged when the commander feels they need that information to cooperate effectively. While it would lead the reader to believe the dissemination of intentions is optional, it does state, “Ignorance of intentions may often lead to inactivity...”<sup>60</sup> It is interesting that, knowing the effect lack of knowledge had on subordinates, doctrine still did not require it to be fully disseminated. However, just before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Infantry Journal published an article that explained how to translate intentions into orders using paragraph 3 of the operations order as the focal point. That appears to be the first instance in which it was suggested that a discussion of intent be placed into its present location, paragraph 3 of the operations order.<sup>61</sup>

As the Army prepared to enter World War II, the doctrinal focus on intentions was greater than at any previous time. The requirement for all commanders to define their intentions was a part of the Army’s new capstone manual, FM 100-5: Operations. In addition, a discussion of the commander’s intentions was included in textbooks issued at the Command and General Staff School.

Regardless of the source, the explanation of the process of conveying intentions remained identical, as it had since Swift first wrote it down. The senior commander was still the focal point of expressing the overall intentions of the command, but it was abundantly clear that all commanders were to ensure their

intentions were understood.<sup>62</sup> This was a significant departure from the past and reflected the increased mobility available, but also the fact that fewer and fewer commanders could see the battlefield. The contents of the commander's intentions remained virtually unchanged between the wars. The higher the unit, the less specificity was expected in an order, but orders were expected to clearly convey the exact meaning and intentions of the writer. Doctrine not only required commanders to define an end state, but also to identify all possible contingencies.<sup>63</sup> How the commander conveyed his intentions changed slightly from World War I. Personal conferences were seen as essential to avoiding confusion. For divisions and above, orders would be written, but commanders had the option of conveying their intentions in writing or in person. However they chose to do it, the bottom line was that, intentions must be clearly understood throughout the command. Commanders were also expected to update intentions during the battle if the situation changed significantly.<sup>64</sup> As in World War I, subordinates were expected to use their initiative and act based on the intentions of their commander in the absence of orders. Commanders were still told not to disclose their intentions for all future actions to prevent undue confusion, however, subordinates were implored to act rather than wait for orders.<sup>65</sup>

## V. World War II (1941-1945)

...[A]s the hour for action approaches successive echelons of command should be given timely information of the commander's intentions so as at the time of entry into action no unit will be in doubt as to its mission or the plan of the higher commander.<sup>66</sup>

As the Army entered World War II, its doctrine concerning the conveying of intentions was similar to Swift's original concept. However, the doctrine had matured and adapted itself to the modern battlefield. The battlefield was expanding to accommodate improvements in technology, and high level commanders became deprived of the ability to oversee the progress of an individual battle personally. The doctrine of the inter-war years recognized this environmental change by refining who was to receive the intentions of the commander.

During World War II, the intentions of the commander were conveyed to lower levels of command than had been done previously. This portion of the Army's doctrine remained stable throughout the war. Although FM 100-5: Operations was updated in June 1944, there was little change in how the concept of intentions was explained. The only change in this version was a renewed emphasis on making the commander's intentions known to all units *before* the battle began. However, something happened which was significant. Companion manuals to FM 100-5 no longer used identical phrases to explain the same concept. Prior to 1942, when the concept of intentions was written in any manual, the explanation was exactly the same as the one appearing in the Army's capstone manual. For many years, the capstone manual had been the Field Service Regulations. This had evolved into FM 100-5: Operations. Swift's definition from, "The Lyceum at Fort Agawam," appeared verbatim in Wagner's writing and in the Field



Service Regulations. It was also repeated in the works of authors in the inter-war years. Now, that continuity was apparently breaking down.<sup>67</sup>

Although doctrinal congruence may have been declining, the use of intentions in the war was not. An excellent example of the use of intentions, and one illustrative of the debate about how much future information commanders should give subordinates, is the plan for Operation Neptune--the Allied invasion of southern France. In the "Initial Joint Plan," a letter of instruction, there is a separate paragraph entitled 'Intentions.' This paragraph states that the purpose of the attack was "to assault simultaneously...with the object of securing as a base for further operations a lodgment area which will include airfield sites and the port of Cherbourg."<sup>68</sup>

Today, one might expect the theater commander, the strategic level war-fighter, to articulate a broad aim that went beyond a single operation. That was not the doctrine of the Army of 1944. Eisenhower's plan was in total agreement with the Army's doctrine. While the 1939 edition of FM 100-5 states letters of instruction should deal with operations over a considerable time period,<sup>69</sup> the 1941 edition of the same manual repeats Swift's dictum cautioning commanders against regulating matters too far in advance in order to avoid the confusion that accompanies frequent changes in orders.<sup>70</sup> Eisenhower's plan does reflect its part in the overall strategic context in the opening paragraphs,<sup>71</sup> but it seems clear that the focus he wanted to inculcate in his subordinates was to secure the beachhead and other points through which follow-on support could arrive. His concern mir-

rored that of every Allied leader. Their concern, and the focus they wanted Eisenhower to maintain, was reflected in the guidance Eisenhower received from the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The Combined Chiefs directed Eisenhower to, "...enter the continent of Europe, and, in conjunction with other United Nations, undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her armed forces. *After adequate channel ports have been secured*,[emphasis added] exploitation will be directed to securing an area that will facilitate both ground and air operations against the enemy."<sup>72</sup> While neither the Combined Chiefs' intentions, nor Eisenhower's, focused on the enemy force, as had Pershing's in World War I,<sup>73</sup> they did reflect the aim of the operation--to get ashore and establish a base of operations on the continent. Destruction of the enemy force would come later.

Just as senior officers at the strategic level operated within the Army's doctrine concerning the conveying of intentions, so did lower level commanders. Probably the best example of a commander following the U.S. Army doctrine concerning intentions was the commander of the 4th Armored Division, Major General John S. "P" Wood. Wood constantly visited subordinate commanders to ensure they understood his intentions. He used mission-type orders to disseminate his instructions, and then followed them with the kind of personal visits Swift had described years before, and current doctrine continued to urge. Wood has been criticized for many things, but he has never been criticized for not keeping his subordinates informed of his plans. His use of the process of face to

face communication of his intentions ensured his division was able to maintain a consistently rapid operational tempo.<sup>74</sup>

During World War II the requirement to convey a commander's intentions remained a prominent part of FM 100-5. However, the consistent use of a common definition in all Army publications was changing. Perhaps, the Army was promoting more individualism during the war, or as doctrine writing became more decentralized it began to be less homogenized. However, there is no documentation for this assertion.<sup>75</sup> Army doctrine before and during World War II stated that commanders at all levels needed to ensure their intentions were known. Part of the maturation process had been the removal of the 'highest commander' caveat. World War II doctrine only spoke of 'the commander.' While it was still recognized that the highest commander's intentions took precedence, there was now an expectation that intentions were to be conveyed at all levels. The best explanation for this seems to be the continued expansion of the battlefield. No longer could the supreme commander follow Wagner's dictum of positioning himself in a central location to oversee the battle personally. On the World War II battlefield, it was difficult for a platoon leader to maintain consistently the same clear picture of the battle that Napoleon had been able to acquire from a hilltop overlooking a 19th Century battle.<sup>76</sup>

The content of intentions was not clearly defined in doctrine except to ensure there was no wasted effort on the part of subordinates. Intentions were expressed to ensure each member of the command understood what their higher

commander wanted to accomplish. An article written in 1951 supported the power of properly conveyed intentions. In explaining the Third Army's relentless push through France, the author noted that the objective of Third Army's operations was at the forefront of every soldier's mind, especially planners of future operations. This kind of focus would have been impossible without the clear articulation of intentions by commanders throughout the army. Doctrine also recognized that intentions needed to be updated during the battle. The best way to do this was face to face communication. General Wood's success clearly shows the effectiveness of this procedure.<sup>77</sup>

## **VI. The Army Enters the Nuclear Age (1947-1954)**

**An order is faulty if it does not convey to the recipient the exact meaning and intention of the commander.... Subordinates must be told in direct and unmistakable terms exactly what their leader wants them to do.**<sup>78</sup>

As World War II ended the Army had reached its pinnacle. It had successfully completed the largest war in its history, grown to nearly 100 divisions, and demonstrated that its doctrine had anticipated correctly the kind of war the Army would have to fight. The appearance of nuclear weapons in the final acts of war changed forever the way the Army viewed warfare. During the next few years, Army leaders, and doctrine writers, would search for a doctrine that provided solutions to the new military problems posed by the nuclear battlefield.

National leaders faced their own problems. Millions of returning soldiers, sailors, and airmen wanted to join an industrial economy grown strong from the

war. The government realized it could not afford a large standing military force, and maintain the economic momentum. Moreover, the United States also faced the dilemma created by its new international responsibilities, especially the growing threat from the Soviet Union. How could America present itself as a strong foe of communism, and at the same time continue to pay for government provided services to which American society had grown accustomed? A large standing military would make it impossible for the national government to operate within its fiscal means. Moreover, the United States industrial base had to serve as the foundation for free-world recovery and, at the end of the greatest war the world had known, there was no popular support for continual maintenance of large conventional military forces with which to confront the Soviet hordes. There had to be an alternative--that alternative was nuclear weapons and the restructuring of the defense establishment.<sup>79</sup>

The Truman administration made two momentous decisions in the immediate post-war period that would have profound effects on Army doctrine. The creation of the Department of Defense, and the articulation of a national strategy based on nuclear weapons. The Defense Reorganization Act of 1947 resulted in the Secretary of the Army losing his Cabinet rank and made the Secretary of Defense the principal civilian advisor to the President on military matters. It also formalized the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the military advisory body to the President.

This new organizational structure increased the centralized control of the Defense establishment through the Secretary of Defense, and served to heighten the

interservice rivalries the restructuring was intended to eliminate.<sup>80</sup> The Truman Administration's articulation of a strategy based on nuclear weapons created a different view of warfighting than had been seen previously. Funding decisions became based on an individual Service's ability to contribute to the nuclear warfight. The Army became convinced that its very existence depended on its ability not only to fight in a nuclear environment, but also its capability to deliver nuclear rounds. This required the Army to develop its own arsenal of nuclear weapons.<sup>81</sup>

Army doctrine writers recognized the need for the Army to operate in the nuclear environment, and that the United States would not be able to maintain its asymmetrical advantage over the Soviets in the nuclear arena indefinitely. The Army's new doctrine was somewhat prescient in reflecting the fact that the Army would fight against an opponent also possessing nuclear weapons. While the doctrine writers could anticipate a potential nuclear battlefield, they were unable to develop doctrine at a pace matching the unprecedented technological explosion going on around them. Their problem was exacerbated by changes in strategic concepts that occurred as rapidly as the technology. As a result, the period between 1947 and 1962 was noted for many shifts in doctrine that seemed to present a different approach to warfare with each new manual.<sup>82</sup>

In 1949 a new FM 100-5 was published in the midst of a debate about how best to fight on the nuclear battlefield. The argument pitted those who advocated increased control of subordinates against those who advocated less. The

advocates of more control felt armies would only be able to concentrate on the nuclear battlefield for brief periods. Concentration would have to be controlled closely to ensure minimum risk to forces exposed to possible nuclear attack. To achieve the control necessary to ensure fleeting concentrations, individual initiative would have to be minimized. In contrast, the advocates of decentralized control believed that more individual initiative was required on the nuclear battlefield since units were likely to remain dispersed and out of the control of their immediate superior. The key to more initiative was the selection of the "aim to be sought" by the commander. Subordinates would be provided this aim, and operations would be conducted within the framework it established. These advocates argued that too much control created rigidity, rather than the flexibility they saw as necessary to enable commanders to take advantage of fleeting opportunities. There was, however, little debate over the fundamental assertion that conventional war was all but obsolete. Future battles, many believed, would no longer be fought in a way resembling World War II. It appeared the Army's past would provide few lessons for its future.<sup>83</sup>

FM 100-5 reflected the position of the advocates of increased control over subordinates. So much did this manual reflect a methodology of centralized control, that for the first time in the history of Army doctrine, there was no discussion of the conveying of the commander's intentions to subordinates. The process which had proved so useful to a large Army maneuvering over Europe's countryside, and island hopping in the Pacific, no longer seemed to have utility

on a battlefield dominated by nuclear weapons. Control would be the paramount consideration. As a result, subordinates would need only minimal information about future operations. This position was somewhat tempered when FM 101-5 was published in 1950. The manual did discuss a new doctrinal term, 'the commander's concept,' which sounded remarkably like the conveying of intentions. Although the manual explained that from the commander's concept came the commander's decision which reflected what the entire command was to do, this explanation lacked a detailed discussion of how to communicate both the commander's concept, and the ultimate decision of the commander which had been so prominent in previous doctrine. In addition, doctrine made no provision for updating the commander's concept as objectives were secured, or the tactical situation changed.<sup>84</sup> This doctrinal process probably reflected the new, more centralized focus of doctrine, as opposed to the decentralized process implied by the previous explanations of conveying the *intentions* of the commander.

The new doctrine received an unexpected field test in 1950 when conflict erupted on the Korean peninsula. Although the United States indicated its willingness to support the South Korean government with military force, the North Korean aggressor was not persuaded to withdraw. Therefore, the United States was forced to fight a war that its doctrine had not envisioned --a conventional war.<sup>85</sup> What is striking, from a doctrinal perspective, is that the military seemed almost unaware that the war was taking place at all. Since the war turned out to be different from expectations, one might have expected that professional journals



would offer insights into the war ongoing. However, a review of the most prominent journal, Military Review, revealed only three articles written during the war dealing with the fighting in Korea. The preponderance of the articles published dealt with World War II achievements, or nuclear warfare issues.

As a result of a lack of attention to the war in professional literature, examining the records of individual organizations in Korea provides the best way to view how units operated in combat. The wartime records of I Corps indicate that the operations of larger headquarters in Korea may have been impaired by the new doctrine. The situation was explained in a report written by the Commander of I Corps, Major General Lionel McGarr, to General Maxwell Taylor.

**The greatest threat to the efficient, coordinated staff action has been the tendency to violate or ignore the principle [sic] of coordination within and between staff sections...indoctrinating the staff officers and subordinate commanders to the will and the ways of the commander...[which has led] to plans and orders being prepared in a vacuum.... [There was a] lack of sufficient knowledge of plan[s] on the part of key staff officers of Army Headquarters through apparent insufficient intra-staff coordination.... [A]dditional supervision and guidance must be accomplished to insure that the plan is successfully implemented in accordance with the commanders [sic] concept and desires.<sup>86</sup>**

General McGarr described what happens in the absence of a clear articulation of the commander's intentions to his staff. The staff, so important in the past, was blamed for the problems of the present. However, the staff, as always, was a reflection of the commander. McGarr was identifying what happens when the commander failed to ensure his staff understood his intentions, or in the con-

temporary parlance, his commander's concept. While the evidence is clear McGarr had difficulty communicating his intentions with his staff, of more importance is the communication of intentions to subordinate commanders. The examples of the initial commander of the United Nations Command, General Douglas MacArthur, or McGarr's counterpart in X Corps, Major General Edward M. Almond, illustrate how two senior commanders in Korea effectively communicated their intentions.

Douglas MacArthur has received his share of criticism for many of the problems during the Korean War. However, he was the only member of the Army who was a contemporary of sorts with Eben Swift. MacArthur's actions in World War I, World War II, and Korea clearly demonstrate how he had internalized the doctrinal dictums regarding the communication of intentions to subordinates. In the Korean Theater, MacArthur met repeatedly with subordinate commanders to discuss future operations. He held a secret meeting in Seoul on September 29, 1950 with his key commanders. Meeting just after the successful Inchon landings, MacArthur laid out his future campaign plans. These included not only the crossing of the 38th Parallel and the expansion of the overall war aims, but the planned amphibious operations at Wonson in North Korea.<sup>87</sup> After this meeting, there was no doubt in the minds of the generals what the intentions of the senior commander were. The concept of conveying the commander's intentions may have been out of doctrine, but the old habits of conveying them were not. MacArthur was not the only commander who met face to face with his sub-

ordinates to communicate intentions. General Almond held 76 conferences of the kind prescribed in the 1944 edition of FM 100-5 in a period of 14 days just after the Wonson landings. In the days following the intervention of the Red Chinese, Almond personally met with the division commanders at their command posts to discuss operations, and provide guidance based on the changing and very confusing tactical situation. This was another clear example of the communication of intentions, and the fact it was a continuous process.<sup>88</sup>

As the war ended, the Army treated Korea as an anomaly. The Army still believed the battlefield of the future would most likely be a nuclear one. While the Korean War had not gone nuclear, and had been a different kind of war than had been expected, the Army's corporate opinion was that there were no new lessons to be gained from the Korean experience.<sup>89</sup> However, the Army's actions lead to a different conclusion. In September, 1954, a new FM 100-5 was published. This manual's release coincided with increased interest in a new tactical organizational structure for the Army. This new structure, the Pentomic Division, made its appearance in 1956. This organizational structure, coupled with the new doctrine, reflected the Army's belief that World War II organizations would be unable to operate on a nuclear battlefield that was expected to be cellular, not linear. The Army sought the ability to fight either conventional or nuclear wars by making the division a relatively autonomous force with dispersed battle groups capable of sustained operations. This was possible because improvements in communications allowed commanders to exercise control using reliable radios

rather than telephones. Instantaneous, remote communication was now possible.<sup>90</sup>

To take advantage of the assumed increase in the tactical mobility of the battle group, doctrine adopted a more flexible approach to the problem of command and control as this extract from FM 100-5 indicates.

Set rules and methods must be avoided...The commander's decision is translated into action by means of combat orders which convey the *commander's intent* [emphasis added] and which give specific instructions to guide all elements of the command in the conduct of the operation.... Combat orders must clearly and concisely express the intent of the commander.... After providing for the issuance of orders, [the commander] visits his subordinate commanders and his troops in order to inspire confidence, to assure himself that his orders are understood, and that adequate preparations for actions are underway.<sup>91</sup>

As well as adopting to the new organizational structure, it also appeared that doctrine addressed the concerns of General McGarr. Of note is the initial appearance of the terminology, 'commander's intent,' in Army doctrine, and a reinforcement of the 1936 direction to provide that intent to every level in the organization.<sup>92</sup>

The period 1947-1962 was important because it set the stage for doctrinal developments that followed. As the period opened, there was no doctrinal requirement to provide an expression of the commander's intentions. The explanation of this process was somehow deleted from the doctrine. While the commander's concept may have been its direct descendent, the explanation of the commander's concept does not articulate a complete process of mental formulation of intentions, and then the dissemination of those intentions both orally and

in writing, and the requirement to update intentions in person throughout the course of an operation.

The process, complete with explanation reappears in the 1954 edition of FM 100-5. While there was no indication that the rediscovery of the commander's intent process emerged as a response to problems seen in Korea, the process described, if used, would have gone a long way to resolving the problems General McGarr identified. It was clear in the 1954 manual that the senior commander, and all his subordinate commanders, were to express their intentions in combat orders. After providing subordinates with these orders, commanders were to visit subordinate units so a face to face session could be held to ensure a complete understanding of the commander's intentions, and determine whether or not adequate preparations had been made to carry out the commander's plan. An offshoot of this process was that the commander's presence in forward unit areas was seen to have a direct effect on the morale of units, and would serve to inspire confidence among the soldiers.<sup>93</sup>

Just as the face to face communication required in conveying the commander's intent appears to be quite different from the process associated with conveying the commander's concept, the entire process of conveying commander's intent was designed to provide specific instructions to guide all elements of the command throughout an operation. The substantive difference between the 1949/50 doctrine, and that written in 1954, appears to reside in the question of when and how intentions were conveyed, not the content. The 1949

doctrine did not require personal conferences with subordinates, only the conveying of the commander's concept before operations began. While commanders in Korea demonstrated that the process of personal communication was not discontinued just because doctrine did not mandate it, the 1954 doctrine clearly returned to the conceptual process Swift had originally outlined.

Throughout the post-World War II period from 1947-1962, it is clear that doctrine required that subordinate commanders receive either their senior commander's concept, or his intent. These intentions were integrated into the orders of subordinate commanders to ensure the continuity of effort throughout the command. While not so termed, this process appears to be the logical antecedent of the nesting of intentions that General William DePuy would describe more than 20 years later. While that particular intellectual linkage may not be apparent, it is clear that by 1954, doctrine concerning the conveying of intentions had returned to the intellectual roots established prior to 1949.

## **VII. The Army in Transition (1959-1976)**

We must recognize that battle is inherently elastic and beyond rigid control. Where control is exercised, it must be done at the subordinate level as self-control with reference to a mission, but better yet, with reference to an overall operational vision.<sup>94</sup>

Although a doctrine of conveying intentions had returned to FM 100-5 in 1954, the Army was still searching for the optimum organizational structure for both the nuclear and non-nuclear battlefield. In 1959, the Army leadership real-

ized that there were shortcomings in the Pentomic structure. Sensing that units needed to increase their organic firepower and mobility, the Reorganization Objectives Army Division, or ROAD, structure was implemented beginning in 1962.

While units operating under this structure were capable of operating in a nuclear, or non-nuclear environment, the Army's leadership had concluded that the greatest likelihood for combat was now on a *non-nuclear* battlefield, at least at the outset of a conflict. Therefore, doctrine placed the greatest emphasis on operations in a non-nuclear environment.<sup>95</sup>

The belief that future wars would begin as non-nuclear conflicts was probably rooted in the philosophical shift that accompanied the change in Presidential administrations in 1961. President Kennedy, and his advisors, concluded the nation needed a new philosophy for responding to the Soviet threat. That philosophy, called flexible response, stated that the military must be capable of conventional, counterinsurgency, and nuclear operations. Moreover, the administration believed each service did *not* require the capability to fight a war independently, and that increased control of the military by the appointed civilian leadership was preferred.<sup>96</sup>

Shortly after Kennedy took office, the Army published a doctrine reflecting the flexible response philosophy. The 1962 FM 100-5, and other doctrine, stressed maneuver and the use of Army aviation assets. It clearly articulated a separate doctrine for the nuclear and non-nuclear battlefields. In fact, its discussion of nuclear operations was more detailed, and in greater depth, than its prede-

cessors. Doctrine officially recognized that the nuclear battlefield required decentralized and flexible operations. While it did not use the word intent in the manual, it did use, for the first time, the German concept of mission-type orders. Given the fact that mission-type orders convey the commander's intentions, it is possible to say conveying intentions remained a part of the doctrine for the nuclear battlefield.<sup>97</sup>

In the midst of the restructuring of the Army, and the implementation of its new doctrine touting the area defense, the United States became involved in the Cuban Missile Crisis. The behavior of the national leadership, during the crisis, epitomized their belief in increased civilian control of the military. It was apparent that escalation would be based on a decision from civilian leaders, not the military. Following the crisis, the portion of FM 100-5 pertaining to non-nuclear operations gained primacy. Touting the need for greater *centralized control*, doctrine now required giving detailed instructions to subordinates both before and during operations.<sup>98</sup>

In the years immediately before publication of the 1962 FM 100-5 two other events took place that would affect Army doctrine in the 1960s. First, the Army began to focus on the helicopter as a means to enhance the mobility of widely dispersed formations on the *nuclear* battlefield, and renewed its focus on unconventional operations.

The Army had always seen the helicopter as an integral part of the ROAD division. As time went on, the Army leadership began to see the helicopter as a



means to reduce the exposure of soldiers to nuclear effects, and at the same time provide a capability to conduct deep raids and exploitations. Despite some initial opposition from Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Army aviation experiments proved so successful in conventional operations that the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) was organized in 1965.<sup>99</sup>

The desire to show the Army capable of operating across the total spectrum of military operations, as required under the flexible response philosophy, caused the addition of a chapter on 'Operations Short of War' in FM 100-5. At the time, the Army's interest was driven primarily by an interest in Special Forces operations on the part of President Kennedy. While Special Forces provided an inexpensive response capability, the Army did not view them as having much utility, other than to retain the President's interest in Army force structure.<sup>100</sup>

The 1962 doctrine still envisioned a war against a conventional enemy, most likely the Soviets. The Army was focused on preparing for such a war as the United States was drawn into a different sort of conflict in Vietnam. It was the second time following World War II that doctrine failed to correctly anticipate the type of conflict in which the Army would be engaged. Once again the doctrine, and the Army's focus, did not fit the conflict. While doctrine did speak about unconventional warfare, the Army was having trouble *defining* counterinsurgency, much less conducting counterinsurgency operations.<sup>101</sup>

Almost immediately the tactics of the Army focused on defeating or destroying the enemy rather than capturing more conventional objectives. Vietnam

was not to be a war of large engagements. The war quickly became the war of the company commander. While the helicopter was used to enhance ground-tactical mobility, firepower was the dominant characteristic of Army operations. Maneuver was used to fix an enemy force so that artillery and airpower could engage the enemy thereby holding down U.S. casualties. Although senior commanders did not have a doctrinal requirement to provide their intentions, company commanders did generally receive the intentions of their immediate commander before engagements. In most cases these were verbal instructions of the kind Swift had envisioned as the kind of face to face updates used in World War II. However, what company commanders received the most of was the one thing that Swift, and previous Army doctrine, had specifically forbidden--specific instructions on how to carry out the intentions of the commander.<sup>102</sup> The helicopter, and the lack of major engagements, allowed battalion, brigade, and division commanders to over-fly the one or two company commanders actually engaged in fire-fights, and provide their subordinates with immediate and close tactical guidance. This practice, known euphemistically as, the 'Big Squad Leader in the Sky,' probably more than any other example, demonstrated that senior commanders had no clear idea about the process of communicating their intentions and allowing subordinates the latitude to execute those intentions as had been described in the doctrine as recently as 1954.<sup>103</sup>

By 1968, the Army recognized that its doctrine did not fit the conflict it was fighting. While the Army recognized the need to maintain a focus on the

Soviet threat, its doctrine recognized that the centralized control in Vietnam was not the best answer. In September 1968, a revised FM 100-5 was published nine months after the Tet Offensive began. While this doctrine espoused flexibility and adaptability, it did not mention intent by name, but like its nuclear predecessor, implied it. FM 100-5 spoke of decentralization, and allowing subordinates the initiative to interpret and implement broad instructions without the need of the detailed orders that had characterized Army tactical operations in Vietnam. It also saw the need for subordinates to be able to operate when there was no communications with their commander by being able to “deduce the action required” based on what they knew of the commander’s plan. That description articulates the conceptual nature of expressing the commander’s intentions. This was the official doctrine of the Army until the end of the war. While it did not solve the ‘Big Squad Leader in the Sky’ phenomenon, it showed officers, especially junior officers, that doctrine envisioned another way to operate other than the centralized command and control process they had too often seen in Vietnam.<sup>104</sup>

During the Vietnam conflict, the specific doctrinal requirement for conveying intentions is clouded. The Army’s mobility increased dramatically with the formation of the new ROAD Division and the increased use of helicopters. Despite the fact Army forces would, therefore, occupy larger and larger areas, and move more rapidly than ever before, there was only the inference in doctrine to the process of communicating intentions. While the nuclear doctrine in the 1962 FM 100-5 stressed mission-type orders, this part of the overall doctrine was

largely discarded in practice due in part to the greater mobility commanders now enjoyed. Even the 1968 attempt to move toward decentralized operations, as explained in that version of FM 100-5, was apparently not internalized at the senior officer level.

Explaining why the Army apparently abandoned this portion of its doctrine may be as simple as re-looking at Swift's original explanation for why commander's needed to convey their intentions. Swift saw a statement of intentions as necessary because commanders could not be everywhere at once. Conveying their intentions before the battle began, and updating them during the fighting, ensured coherence in the operations of large formations. In Vietnam, ensuring coherence of operations could be done in person, over the radio, while flying above the battle in a helicopter. Since there were few discreet operations larger than company-size, battalion commanders, and their superiors, could be present above the fight to provide the commander on the ground with information about the battle he could not possibly have at ground level. By helicopter, commanders could cover great distances quickly, and their personal presence should have ensured coherence. Since subordinates were, in practice, not afforded wide latitude in the conduct of their small combat operations, knowing the long range intentions of their commander would have been of little value. While there is no direct evidence to support this assertion, the senior commanders who served in Vietnam were responsible for approving doctrine. If they were not satisfied with the way operations were conducted, one would expect they would have made

changes. While the 1968 version of FM 100-5 did sound like Swift's vision of conveying intentions in its discussion of what should happen when subordinates lost contact with their commander, the fact remains that the process of conveying intentions, that had been prominent in doctrine, had disappeared. While there were parts of the intentions doctrine present, it was not obvious that doctrine envisioned a coherent process of conveying intentions as necessary.

### VIII. Renaissance of Doctrine (1976- )

The military vocation is a profession because it has accumulated experiences which make up a body of professional knowledge. In the military view, man learns from his own experience. If he has little opportunity to learn from his own experience, he must learn from the experience of others. Hence, the military officer studies history. For history is, in Liddell Hart's phrase, "universal experience" and military history, as Moltke said is the "most effective means of teaching war during peace." The military ethic then places unusual value upon the ordered, purposive study of history.<sup>105</sup>

The empowerment of subordinates was sought by officers who had served in Vietnam. While they would incorporate lessons learned from that war, their future focus would be on Central Europe. As the Army moved into the 1970s a new situation was emerging. Potential enemies of the U.S. now approached, or exceeded, the strength of America's armed forces, both in numerical size and weapons capabilities. The Israeli Army had fought outnumbered against its Arab neighbors, most of whom were Soviet surrogates, in 1968, and most recently in 1973. As a result, the U.S. Army was particularly interested in lessons from those wars. While the post-World War II Army had not been reform minded, all the evidence suggested the need for significant change if the post-Vietnam Army

was to regain the asymmetrical advantage it had enjoyed for so many years. Significant change was to be driven by a new doctrine and a new headquarters to spearhead the development of doctrine. The Training and Doctrine Command, or TRADOC, was created in 1974 to be the Army's agent of change in what has been termed a new renaissance of the Army.<sup>106</sup>

The changes in the Army's doctrine were led by TRADOC's first commander, General William DePuy. Where some of the doctrinal changes after World War II had been subtle, the 1976 edition of FM 100-5 presented an overarching concept of warfare that rationalized everything the Army did, from training to building new equipment, in terms of how the Army would fight. This new doctrine was so unique that it had its own name, 'The Active Defense.' The success of 'The Active Defense' was based on the ability of a commander to communicate his desires to subordinates. The mechanism for communicating these desires was the old standby, commander's intent. But, while the Army used an old concept, it did something new. The Army began to explain what the commander's intent should look like. Prior to the doctrinal doldrums of the 1950s and 1960s, Army doctrine had explained the basics of the concept of conveying intentions. The details, however, were often spread between various sources. In the 1930 FM 100-15, doctrine called for the intentions of the highest commander to permeate the command. The Army's new doctrine would expand on this same process, an idea General DePuy eventually came to describe as

'nesting.' This would ensure the flexibility necessary to implement what was certainly the Army's most complex doctrine.<sup>107</sup>

While General DePuy saw the 1976 doctrine as an enduring philosophical foundation for the Army, it was not. What it was, however, was an interim measure that ultimately became the catalyst for a debate which led to a doctrine with a new name, and a new focus--Airland Battle. Airland Battle was born when a revised FM 100-5 was published in August 1982. This manual represented the evolution of military thought since the 1976. It was touted to be the doctrine that brought decentralized execution to the forefront of Army doctrine. Yet, commander's intent, seen as a key to decentralized operations, was not very prominent in the manual. In fact, its only appearance is in a section dealing with mission-orders. Nevertheless, it is the release of this manual that is cited, by some, as the beginning of commander's intent in U.S. Army doctrine. How is this possible?<sup>108</sup>

General DePuy came to realize that the writing of doctrine was as much a political exercise as it was intellectual. There was an ongoing debate within the Army about whether the commander's intentions needed to be expressed orally or verbally, if at all. Many of the officers who had supported including commander's intent in doctrine spoke and wrote about the concept as if it were a prominent part of the doctrine. While FM 100-5 was still the doctrinal capstone manual, it did not stand alone. FM 101-5, published in 1984, portrayed commander's intent as an integral part of the commander's concept of operation that

visualized an operation from start to finish. While commander's intent was not identified as one of the essential elements of an order, it was seen as the component that enhances flexibility, provides decentralization, and provides for control.<sup>109</sup>

One of the key supporters for the inclusion of commander's intent in doctrine was General Donn Starry. The commander of TRADOC when the 1982 version of FM 100-5 was being drafted, Starry went all over the Army explaining the process associated with commander's intent. His explanation was a part of the final draft version of FM 100-5 that was staffed in January 1982. Starry's point man on the writing project was Lieutenant Colonel Huba Wass de Czege.<sup>110</sup>

Wass de Czege had defined commander's intent in the final draft as:

What [commanders] want to happen to the enemy. This intent must be consistent with the intent of their superiors and must be communicated clearly to their subordinates. During the battle, commanders must support and expand on the local successes of subordinates.... [C]ommanders must generally trust their subordinates' ability to make correct on-the-spot decisions within the framework of their intent, guidance and support. The subordinate commander has the obligation to insure that he fully understands the intentions of his next higher commander and the mission of the force as a whole.<sup>111</sup>

Wass de Czege's definition is the most comprehensive explanation of the concept yet. It had the ring of Swift's original phrases. Not surprisingly, Wass de Czege had not read Swift in formulating his definition. Wass de Czege had used then current German Army doctrine to formulate his understanding and articulation of commander's intent.<sup>112</sup> Wass de Czege's work, coupled with the powerful presentations of General Starry and others in speeches and articles helped place the concept of commander's intent in the minds of the officers who



would use it. It was probable that the corporate understanding of commander's intent grew from these non-doctrinal sources.

Some proof of this assertion can be found as Airland Battle doctrine evolved further with the publication of the 1986 version of FM 100-5. This newest version provided a definition of commander's intent virtually identical to the one Wass de Czege had written in the 1982 draft. In fact, the linkage to the German Army's doctrine was more obvious in this edition than in its predecessor. This edition, in many ways, helped focus the debate in the professional journals on defining and using commander's intent. There was now a definition of intent in doctrine that matched how the Army intended to fight, or so it seemed. Even though this version was seen as evolutionary, there were criticisms of the way the doctrine was being implemented. Despite the TRADOC Commander, General William Richardson's, desire that doctrine be read and understood, some felt that many officers failed to understand the theoretical and intellectual genesis of the doctrine, and, therefore, failed to grasp its significance.<sup>113</sup> Others felt that while the doctrine had changed, general officers were still over-supervising because they did not really grasp that the proper conveying of commander's intent could empower both the leader and their subordinates.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, the doctrine was fundamentally sound. The consensus General DePuy had sought in 1976 seemed to be achievable with Airland Battle.

The proof of the consensus was the use of Airland Battle doctrine to fight Desert Storm. There was no argument with the success the Army achieved in this

brief war. Still the doctrine was deemed sound, senior leaders saw the need to update it. The Cold War had ended and the Army had regained the asymmetrical relationship it had lost relative to the world's other armies. Also, the U.S. Army was being used frequently in many operations other than general war.

What resulted was publication of the 1993 edition of FM 100-5. While this manual envisioned an Army that would operate across a wide spectrum from general war to humanitarian relief, the concept of conveying commander's intent remained a prominent part of the doctrine. Its definition of commander's intent, while new, encompassed changes in the definition made in 1990 by the TRADOC Commander, General Foss, and had the ring of the best of the explanations from as far back as Eben Swift. The Army's current definition focuses on the enemy, the end in view of the senior commander, and the caveat that long explanations of intent tend to inhibit subordinates. Even the Army's vision of the futuristic battlefield, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5: Force XXI Operations, is not without commander's intent. This vision of the future makes it clear that despite significant improvements in technology, subordinates will have to understand their commander's intentions in order to rapidly execute missions within a battlespace which may no longer be contiguous, or even be in the same continent as their commander.<sup>115</sup>

In assessing how the Army conveyed commander's intentions from 1976 until the present, the most striking point, then, is where the perceived requirement to do so originated. Certainly each successive version of FM 100-5 from 1976 on

articulated a requirement to convey intentions, but the source from which doctrine writers devolved the requirement to convey intentions is different. The 1976 version appears to have been a continuation of the Army's traditional explanation of the concept. In 1982 the intellectual link was clearly to the then contemporary German doctrine. It seems that a reversion to the 19th Century technique of 'Americanization' took place. However, what is even more important is the similarity between the 1982 version and its U.S. predecessors. The doctrine the Army derived from the Germans in 1894 was remarkably similar to the doctrine it got from them in 1982. In the end, the overall source of the concept was the same, and more important, the concept itself was relatively unchanged.

What had changed was the idea of who should receive the intentions of the commander. The highest commander's intentions were still the original source for all other commander's intent statements. The need to nest the subordinate commander's intentions within the higher commander's intentions reappears, not in the doctrine, but in the explanation of the doctrine by a now retired General DePuy. The doctrine clearly articulates that the conveying of intentions, and understanding the meaning of those intentions, is essential to provide decentralization, flexibility, and control. Doctrine recognized a battlefield where lower and lower echelons of command operated more and more independently, either by design or as a result of the friction of war. Understanding of the commander's intent was seen as increasingly the mechanism to ensure the separate parts acted in concert toward achieving a common aim.

In order to achieve the common aim, doctrine now specified that the commander's intentions must include a vision of the operation from start to finish. Intentions have to be focused on the enemy. Moreover, they should be short so as not to trespass on the subordinate's prerogative to determine how to accomplish his commander's intentions. There is, however, a missing piece in contemporary doctrine. None of the manuals anticipates the need for face to face updates with subordinates of the commander's intentions. By 1993, commander's intent had become a thing, not a concept.<sup>116</sup> It was seen as a part of the order, not the process that Swift originally outlined, and that had been carried forward in doctrine. This may be the one area where the new interpretations of the old concept fall short of the ideal. The current doctrine seems to imply commander's intent is conveyed at the start of an operation in a written order that is referenced throughout the operation. As such, it remains the guiding light for subordinate operations. However there is no apparent provision for the appearance of friction on the battlefield, and the subsequent need to either change or modify the commander's intent.<sup>117</sup>

Regardless of the potential problems, commander's intent is alive and well in U.S. Army doctrine. Subordinates nest their own concepts in the higher commander's intentions to ensure continuity of effort. In fact, the need for this continuity increases as technology allows subordinates to occupy greater space on what is becoming an ever larger battlefield. As the Army moves toward the 21st

Century, conveying the commander's intentions may well be more important than it has been over the last 100 hundred years.

## **IX. Conclusions**

**The Army relies on its doctrine to provide intellectual focus and precision for everything it does. One of its principal roles is to allow us to think as a corporate body and have consistent expectations in the conduct of our business. This intellectual process strengthens our organization; it identifies the essence of the Army, stimulates dialogue among professionals, engenders writing--both professional and personal--and codifies thoughts... Doctrine, therefore, is not a peripheral concern; it is the heart of our Army.**<sup>118</sup>

How did the idea of commander's intent originate and mature in the published doctrine of the Army? That answer is not black and white. Clearly, the concept originated with the Germans. The only problem is which Germans? The concept appeared first in U.S. Army doctrine in 1905, derived from Eben Swift's study of the Germans. While the concept changed its name over the years, the underlying idea somehow managed to remain. By 1982, however, Lieutenant Colonel Huba Wass de Czege's version of commander's intent, was a lift from 1980's German doctrine. Wass de Czege did not go to earlier U.S. Army doctrine in his research of this particular concept, nor apparently, did any of the other American officers who were championing its prominent inclusion in Army doctrine. Therefore, the inclusion of commander's intent in Army doctrine after 1982 is probably not an example of a concept that matured within the Army, but one that was rediscovered.

The evidence suggests that after World War II the Army had trouble defining a consistent doctrine. In what might be termed a quest for individuality, the writers of Army doctrine may have separated themselves from their doctrinal roots. Prior to World War II, doctrine remained relatively stagnant except for the period immediately preceding the war. Concepts, like the conveying of intentions, remained unchanged except to update their contemporary use. In fact, the exact words used by Eben Swift in 1894 were still being used in 1941. A concept explained in one source; was defined exactly the same in another source. There was unmistakable continuity in doctrine. After World War II that continuity was lost. The period 1945-1985 has been noted as one where the Army suffered persistent deficiencies in its doctrine.<sup>119</sup> While, as suggested earlier, this can be attributed to the changing environment of limited wars fought under the specter of thermonuclear war; the fact remains that the Army lost track of its doctrinal roots after World War II.

Despite having been lost by doctrine writers along the way, one incontrovertible fact remains; the concept of conveying intentions has not lost its importance over time. Because Huba Wass de Czege and others were so emphatic about ensuring commander's intent be placed in current Army doctrine, in spite of the fact they did not realize the concept had almost always been in doctrine,<sup>120</sup> clearly demonstrates its importance. More than that, the Army moving to become 'Force XXI' will fight on a dispersed and fragmented battlefield. Commanders may command units operating on more than one

continent. They will be irrevocably tethered to their subordinates by electronic links as digitization provides connectivity from the lowest to the highest echelon.

The conveying of the intentions of the commander will assume added importance as the possibility for independent action by subordinates will increase, not decrease in this environment. While the ability to exercise greater centralized control will exist, the potential for catastrophic failure of command links will mean the battle may actually be a decentralized one.<sup>121</sup> Army Chief of Staff, General Gordon Sullivan, has said on many occasions that the lowest level commander may operate at the strategic and operational levels war. That very statement amplifies the importance of every level of command understanding the intentions of the highest commander. The more complicated the battlefield becomes, the greater the need for understanding the ultimate aim of the commander. Equally important to understanding the concept, any doctrinal concept, is understanding its roots. While some have said our Army should no longer be a derivative Army, that is not possible. Our doctrine is rooted in the past, and our past doctrine is derivative. To believe it can not be derivative is to discard all that we have been, and all we have learned from our past.<sup>122</sup> Simply because we desire to write the doctrine of the future doesn't mean we have an exclusive grasp of good ideas.

## Endnotes

1. William E. DePuy, "Concepts of Operation: Heart of Command, Tool of Doctrine," Army 38 (August 1988): 26-27.
2. David A. Fastabend, "The Application of Commander's Intent," Military Review 67 (August 1987): 60; and Edward J. Filiberti, "Command, Control and the Commander's Intent," Military Review 67 (August 1987): 54.
3. Fastabend, "The Application of Commander's Intent," 60; Russell Glenn, "Commander's Intent: Keep It Short," Military Review 67 (August 1987): 51; Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), page numbers are not provided on the electronic library copy provided; United States Army, FM 101-5 (Draft): Command and Control for Commanders and Staff (Fort Monroe, Va.: Training and Doctrine Command, August 1993), H-65; and United States Army, FM 100-5: Operations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, June 1993), GL-2. Each of the military publications has a different definition of commander's intent. While they are similar, they are not the same.
4. Edward J. Filiberti, "Command, Control and the Commander's Intent," 54-58.
5. U.S. Army, Field Service Regulations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1905); Carol Ann Reardon, "The Study of Military History and the Growth of Professionalism in the U.S. Army before World War I" (Louisville: University of Kentucky, 1987), 188-189. While there is some debate about when the Army had its first official doctrine, the publication of the Field Service Regulations codified for the first time, from the Headquarters in Washington, many operational procedures.
6. Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Gramercy Books), 739; and Eben Swift, Field Orders, Messages, and Reports (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1906), 242. The definition of intention as, "a general concept obtained in abstraction from ideas or images...or one obtained by reflection..." fits Swift's explanation well, in that, he saw the conveying of intentions as a dynamic process.
7. Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, The Conduct of War: A Brief Study of Its Most Important Principles and Forms, Translated by G.F. Levenson (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd., 1908), 97.



8. Helmut von Moltke, Moltke's War Lessons, Translated by Harry Bell, (Fort Leavenworth: Army Service Schools, 1915), 21.
9. Moltke, Moltke's War Lessons, 25.
10. Timothy K. Nenninger, The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army: Education, Professionalism, and the Officers Corps of the United States Army 1881-1918 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978), 36; and Peter Skirbunt, "Prologue to Reform: The 'Germanization' of the U.S. Army 1865-1898" (Ph.D. Dissertation: Ohio State University, 1983), 6-9. There was so much interest in European military doctrine that the Army formed the Military Information Division in 1885 to coordinate visiting officer's observations.
11. William A. Ganoe, The History of the United States Army (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1924), 317; and Skirbunt, "Prologue to Reform," 86-94. Since the American Revolution, the United States Army had turned almost exclusively to the French for their doctrine. Many U.S. manuals were verbatim translations of the French manual from which they were derived.
12. Skirbunt, "Prologue to Reform," 64-68; John P. Wisser, Practical Exercises in Tactics and Strategies: For the Use of the Regular Army and Militia (Kansas City: Hudson-Kimberly, 1903), 5; and Ganoe, History of the United States Army, 317. Sherman was preceded in his visit by Philip Sheridan in 1870-1871. However, it was the visit of the Army's senior leader that seemed to spur the ultimate activity.
13. Nenninger, The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army, 47.
14. von der Goltz, The Conduct of War, 97-99, 181; Hans von Keisling, Operations Orders: A Technical Study, Translated by Oliver L. Spaulding (Kansas City: Franklin Hudson Publishing Co., 1911), 6-8; and Moltke, Moltke's War Lessons, 19-25.
15. Reardon, "The Study of Military History and the Growth of Professionalism in the U.S. Army before World War I," 203-211; and Nenninger, The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army, 39. Americanization is a term used here to emphasize that the American authors were reading the Germans, but using their own examples. The Germans, and most Europeans, had discarded the lessons of the American Civil War, but the American authors used examples from that war to illustrate the points the German writers made.

16. Ganoë, History of the United States Army, 313 & 363; and Nenninger, The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army, 36. Swift did not speak German, but used French translations of the original German works.

17. Dudley T. Cornish, "Speech at Inducting MG Eben Swift into the Fort Leavenworth Hall of Fame," (Fort Leavenworth, May 9, 1979), 12-17; Nenninger, The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army, 4; C.H. Corlett, "The Evolution of Field Orders," Coast Artillery Journal 62 (June 1925): 513; and William H. Janes, "Selected Writings of Eben Swift" (Masters Thesis: McNeese State University) 31. Swift is credited with three significant innovations: the applicatory method of instruction, use of Kriegsspiel or wargaming in the training of officers, and the operations order format. Although Nenninger believes Swift less intellectual than Wagner, Swift did not get an active regimental command because the officers in that regiment perceived him as too cerebral and not suited to a line unit. Their protests with superiors caused Swift to be assigned to a less prestigious unit.

18. Eben Swift, "The Lyceum at Fort Agawam," Journal of the Military Service Institution 10 (March 1897): 242.

19. Eben Swift, Field Orders, Messages, and Reports (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1906), 5; Keisling, Operation Orders, 8; and Moltke, Moltke's War Lessons, 25. The Germans disdained any sort of mandated format.

20. Corlett, "The Evolution of Field Orders," 502-503; and Ivan J. Birrer, "Letter of Instructions," Military Review 45 (August 1965): 59-61. Corlett shows the Field Order of Rocroi written by a French commander in 1643 as an early example of the letter of instruction. It was basically what we would know today as Paragraph 3 of the operations order. The letter of instruction is no longer a part of Army doctrine. However, joint doctrine does not prescribe a format for campaign planning and while no format is recommended, the letter of instruction would probably be the basis for a current joint campaign plan.

21. Ganoë, History of the United States Army, 357. General P. St. George Cooke did write Cavalry Tactics in 1883, and this book was considered 'doctrine.' However, it was not sanctioned by the Army as an official publication in the same way we understand doctrine today.

22. Swift, "The Lyceum at Fort Agawam," 223-277; Edward J. Filiberti, "The Standard Operations Order Format: Is Its Current Form and Content Sufficient for Command and Control" (Masters Monograph: Command and General Staff College, 1990), 54; and Nenninger, The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army, 47. In

Swift's article he lays out a way to conduct training. It is far more than a précis on orders. Many of the suggestions he makes are still valid today.

23. U.S. Army, Field Service Regulations (1905), 30; Edward M. Coffman, The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 11; and Arthur L. Wagner, Organization and Tactics (Kansas City: Franklin Hudson Co., 1918), 194-196. In Wagner's view the corps was the lowest strategic level formation. He called it an army in itself. His view is much the same as the current view of the corps as the lowest operational level organization, and the formation the Army chooses most often to use as a base to form a Joint Task Force.

24. Wagner, Operations and Tactics, 197-198, 441-442; Swift, "The Lyceum at Fort Agawam," 242; Horace Porter, "Five Forks and the Pursuit of Lee," in Battles and Leaders of the Civil War: Grant-Lee Edition vol. IV part II, ed. Robert U. Johnson (New York: The Century Company, 1884), 708; U.S. Grant, Memoirs and Selected Letters: Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant (New York: Library of America, 1990), 550. This system of utilizing staff officers had its U.S. Army genesis in the Civil War. The system was formalized in 20th Century doctrine by Swift and Wagner.

25. Swift, Field Orders, Messages, and Reports, 22-29; E.A. Kreger, "Some Observations Concerning Field Orders," Journal of The United States Infantry Association 3 (April 1907): 97; and Von der Goltz, The Conduct of War, 97-98. This debate was for the most part informal. It is called a debate here to reflect the shifting doctrinal positions over the years.

26. Swift, Field Service Regulation, 30.

27. Moltke, Moltke's War Lessons, 25.

28. Even though the U.S. fought a two-hemisphere war against Spain in 1898, the battles were similar to those fought in 1861-1865 in terms of command and control.

29. U.S. Army, Field Service Regulations (1905), 29.

30. Swift, "The Lyceum at Fort Agawam," 242; Swift, Field Orders, Messages, and Reports, 22; and Wagner, Operations and Tactics, 197-198.

31. Swift, Field Orders, Messages, and Reports, 22.

32. Moltke, Moltke's War Lessons, 25.

33. U.S. Army, Field Service Regulations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1914), 83-84.
34. Coffman, The War to End All Wars, 11. In 1912 U.S. military attaches were told to canvass Europe for opinions about the Army. They received no positive feedback.
35. Coffman, The War to End All Wars, 18. The last officer from the Civil War Army to retire was Colonel John Clem, the famed drummer boy at Shiloh. In reviewing professional articles from the period, the vast majority are written by captains and majors. It was this group that was also writing the Army's first doctrine.
36. Coffman, The War to End All Wars, 11-12; and Corlett, "The Evolution of Field Orders," 513. One officer was conspicuously absent from the roles of Leavenworth graduates. John J. Pershing never attended Leavenworth, although he did take the course by correspondence.
37. Harry G. Bishop, Operations Orders: Field Artillery (Menasha, Wisc.: The Collegiate Press, 1916), Preface-21.
38. G.E. Thorne, "A Tactical Exercise and Solution Involving the Orders for a March and Orders for an Attack," Journal of the United States Infantry Association 3 (July 1906), 172.
39. Swift, Field Orders, Messages, and Reports, 22; and U.S. Army, Field Service Regulations (1914), 43.
40. Bishop, Operations Orders: Field Artillery, 18-21. This view was exactly the same as the British explained in their Field Service Regulations.
41. Coffman, The War to End All Wars, 260; U.S. Army, Field Service Regulations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1910), 61; U.S. Army, Field Service Regulations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1913), 61-62; U.S. Army, Field Service Regulations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1914), 43-85; John J. Pershing and Hunter Liggett, Report from the First Army American Expeditionary Force: Organization and Operations (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: The General Service School Press, 1923), 93; and George C. Marshall, Memoirs of My Service in the World War, 1917-1918 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), 124-126. The Americans would complain many times about the French sending them into battle confused by repeated changes in orders.

42. William A. Ganoe, The English of Military Communications (Menasha, Wisc.: The Collegiate Press, 1918), 66.
43. Ganoe, The English of Military Communications, 124-139.
44. Ganoe, History of the United States Army, 298-354.
45. Swift, Field Orders, Messages, and Reports, 44-45, U.S. Army, Records of the Second Division: Regular Forces vol. 1 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1918-1919); and U.S. Army, United States Army in the World War 1917-1919: Military Operations of the American Expeditionary Forces (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 119, 482-483.
46. U.S. Army, General Orders, GHQ, AEF, vol. 16 of United States Army in the World War 1917-1919 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 106-107; and Marshall, Memoirs of My Service in the World War, 124.
47. Coffman, The War to End All Wars, 313; and T. Harry Williams, The History of American Wars from Colonial Times to World War I (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 412-413.
48. Ganoe, The English of Military Communications 139; U.S. Army, Field Service Regulations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1918), 83-84; and Bishop, Operations Orders, 18-21.
49. Ganoe, The English of Military Communications, 139; U.S. Army, Field Service Regulations (1918), 83-84; and Bishop, Operations Orders, 18-21.
50. U.S. Army, Field Service Regulations (1918), 83.
51. U.S. Army, Field Service Regulations (1918), 85.
52. Ganoe, The English of Military Communications, 124-125.
53. U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (Tentative) (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), 61.
54. Corlett, "The Evolution of Field Orders," 513; Herbert J. Brees, Combat Orders (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: The General Service School Press, 1920), 3; Timothy T. Lupfer, The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: Combat Studies Institute, 1981), 8; and Marshall, Memoirs of My Service in the World War, 126.

Marshall wrote that he used Ludendorff's tactical instructions as a guide for composing orders as a First Army staff officer.

55. Brees, Combat Orders, 3-40.

56. U.S. Army, FM 100-15: Manual for Large Units (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1930), 1-6. This was the first time in doctrine that the concept we refer to today as nesting of concepts was articulated.

57. Command and General Staff School, Combat Orders, (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: The Command and General Staff School Press, 1936), 49.

58. Command and General Staff School, Combat Orders, 12-53; Francis G. Bonham, "Analysis of Army Orders and Annexes" (Lecture at the Army War College, 1936), 5-13; and Alan Pendelton, "On Combat Orders," Infantry Journal 43 (April 1936): 132-134. Bonham points out that the army commander will be beset by difficulties not of a combat nature. Friction between staff and command, jealousies between commands, ambitious subordinates with strong political backing who would win the war their way [are problems faced by senior commanders].... [M]ore than once these factors have upset capable commanders who failed to appreciate their importance. The army commander's job is to insure execution of his order by explaining it in person to his commanders when possible, and otherwise to the staff. Pendelton relates that in the latter days of the war in the A.E.F. it was almost routine for higher headquarters to consume so much time preparing elaborate orders that they never reached the battalions who were the real units of execution.

59. U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (1939), 35.

60. U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1941), 32 & 55.

61. John U. Ayotte, "Combat Orders," Infantry Journal 49 (November 1941): 6.

62. U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (1941), 156.

63. Brees, Combat Orders, 9; U.S. Army, A Manual for Commanders of Large Units (Provisional) vol. 1-2, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1930), 4-6; U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (1939), 35.

64. U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (1939), 35; Brees, Combat Orders, 23; and U.S. Army, A Manual for Commanders of Large Units, 6.

65. U.S. Army, A Manual for Commanders of Large Units, 1; U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (1939), 35; and U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (1941), 156.
66. U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944), 40.
67. U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Field Service Regulations Operations, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944), 40; The Command and General Staff School, Combat Orders (Tentative) (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: The Command and General Staff School, 1936), 69; U.S. Army, FM 100-15: Field Service Regulations Larger Units (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942), 2-3; Swift, "The Lyceum at Fort Agawam," 242; Wagner, Operations and Tactics, 442; U.S. Army, Field Service Regulations (1905), 27-28; U.S. Army, FM 100-5 (1941), 32; and U.S. Army, FM 101-5: The Staff Officer's Field Manual: Staff Organization and Procedures (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940), 113. The inter-war authors, Ganoë, Brees, and others, repeated Swift's phases in their individual work. FM 101-5, the manual that was supposed to explain orders writing, contained no mention of intentions.
68. Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces, "NEPTUNE-Initial Joint Plan," (London, 1944) , 4; and War Office, Operations: General vol. 1 in Field Service Regulations (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1935), 27. There is no evidence indicating why the "Intentions" paragraph was in the plan. Both British and the U.S. doctrine talked about intentions, but neither mandated placement of it in a particular paragraph. What appears to have happened is an adoption of the U.S. doctrine that said the letter of instruction was a non-format dependent document. The SHAPE staff probably developed this as their own format, and included an 'Intentions' paragraph to ensure clarity.
69. U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (1939), 59.
70. U.S. Army, FM 100-5 (1941), 55; David Eisenhower, Eisenhower at War 1943-1945 (New York: Random House, 1986), 177; and Brees, Combat Orders, 13. This concept of limiting the amount of information subordinates received was in the Brees textbook used at the Command and General Staff School when Eisenhower attended, and was the Honor Graduate. It was, therefore, a concept he probably understood clearly.
71. Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces, "NEPTUNE-Initial Joint Plan," 1.

72. Forrest C. Pogue, The Supreme Commander (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1954), 53.

73. U.S. Army, General Orders, GHQ, AEF, 106-107.

74. Hanson W. Baldwin, Tiger Jack (Fort Collins, Colo.: Old Army Press, 1979), 133-148; Swift, Field Orders, Reports, and Messages, 22; U.S. Army, FM 100-5 (1941), 35; and James H. Willbanks, "Airland Battle Tactical Command and Control: Reducing the Need to Communicate Electronically in the Command and Control of Combat Operations at the Tactical Level" (Masters Thesis: Command and General Staff College, 1984), 57.

75. U.S. Army, FM 100-5 (1941), 32; U.S. Army, FM 100-5 (1944), 40, U.S. Army, FM 100-15 (1942), 2-3; and Morris Janowitz, The Professional Soldier (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960). Janowitz' book looks at the sociological make-up of the Army. While it does not focus on the World War II Army, some of his assertions could be interpreted to suggest the Army began allowing officers more individual expression as the war went on, and certainly later.

76. Swift, Field Orders, Reports, and Messages, 21-24; Command and General Staff School, Combat Orders (Tentative), 49; U.S. Army, FM 100-5 (1939), 35; U.S. Army, FM 100-5 (1941), 155; and U.S. Army, FM 100-5 (1944), 40.

77. U.S. Army, FM 100-5 (1944), 40; Frank E. Stevenson, "Third Army's Planning for the Crossing of the Rhine River," Military Review 30 (March 1951): 42; Command and General Staff School, Combat Orders (Tentative), 49; and Baldwin, Tiger Jack, 133-148.

78. U.S. Army, FM 101-5: The Staff Officer's Field Manual: Staff Organization and Procedures (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955), 113.

79. David McCullough, Truman (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 476-483 and 772-792; and William E. Pemberton, Harry S. Truman: Fair Dealer and Cold Warrior (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 129-131.

80. Edgar F. Raines, Jr. and Major David R. Campbell, The Army and the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Evolution of Army Ideas on the Command, Control, and Coordination of the U.S. Armed Forces 19412-1985 (Washington: U.S. Center of Military History, 1986), 31-65. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had functioned as an advisory body during World War II. However, it was not founded in either policy or law, but was the result of U.S.-British military coordination.



81. McCullough, Truman, 741 and 764-765; Pemberton, Harry S. Truman, 128-131; and Raines and Campbell, The Army and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 55-65.
82. Robert A. Doughty, The Evolution of U.S. Tactical Doctrine 1946-1976 (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: Combat Studies Institute, 1979) 1-19.
83. "Principles of Modern Warfare," Digested from an article in The Royal Air Force Quarterly, (January 1948, reprinted in Military Review, 28 (November 1948): 101-104; U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949); and Doughty, The Evolution of U.S. Tactical Doctrine, 1-19. Many of these arguments sounded remarkably like the doctrine von der Goltz had advocated in the 19th Century.
84. U.S. Army, FM 101-5: The Staff Officer's Field Manual: Staff Organization and Procedures (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 35.
85. McCullough, Truman, 773-793; and Pemberton, Harry S. Truman, 135-138.
86. I Corps, "Operation Order 30" (Uijongbu, Korea, March 30, 1953); U.S. Army, FM 101-5, (1950), 75-97; Arthur M. Chester and John E. Murray, Orders and Directives. A Manual for Commanders, Staff Officers, and Noncommissioned Officers (Washington: Combat Forces Press, 1953), 103; Lionel C. McGarr, "Lessons from Korean Combat," (comments from Major General McGarr to General Maxwell D. Taylor), Part II Annex G.
87. Joseph V. Spittler, Jr., "Operation Chromite 15-30 September 1950" (Student Paper: Command and General Staff College, 1965), 11-28.
88. U.S. Army, FM 100-5 (1949), 40; Doughty, Evolution of U.S. Tactical Doctrine 1946-1976, 8-9; Peter B. Torres, "Operation Chromite" (Student Paper: Command and General Staff College, 1973), 21; Spittler, "Operation Chromite 15-30 September 1950," 11-28; and Edward M. Almond, "Special Report on the Chosin Reservoir 27 Nov-10 Dec 50" (Republic of Korea: Headquarters, X Corps, September 11, 1950), 2-18.
89. Doughty, Evolution of U.S. Tactical Doctrine 1946-1976, 12.
90. Doughty, Evolution of U.S. Tactical Doctrine 1946-1976, 18. This was probably the most radical organizational change the Army experienced in peacetime.
91. U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954), 7, 32, 45.

92. Doughty, Evolution of U.S. Tactical Doctrine 1946-1976, 16-24; and James T. Root and Bickford E. Sawyer, "The New Operation Order," Infantry School Quarterly 44 (July 1954): 28-37. The Root and Sawyer article proposed a new order format that was supposed to respond to the modern battlefield better than its 19th Century predecessor. It was never adopted.

93. During a lecture at Fort Leavenworth, Professor Paul Fussell reported that as an infantry platoon leader in the last six months of World War II, he saw only one field grade officer at the front. While doctrine may prescribe solutions, writing instructions in a manual does not mean the process described will occur. Fussell affirmed the impact on morale that the absence of the senior leaders made that was predicted in the doctrine.

94. James J. Schneider, "An Open Letter to General George S. Patton," Military Review 64 (June 1986): 70.

95. Doughty, Evolution of U.S. Tactical Doctrine 1946-1976, 25-29.

96. John W. Gardner, ed., President John F. Kennedy: To Turn the Tide (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 60-61; M.B. Schnapper, ed., New Frontiers of the Kennedy Administration (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1961), 15; and J. Richard Snyder, ed., John F. Kennedy: Person, Policy, Presidency Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 1988), 134.

97. U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 59-61. It is commonly believed that the term mission-orders was coined by William Lind. Clearly, the term appears in Army doctrine 20 years before Lind publishes his book, Maneuver Warfare.

98. Joseph F. Bouchard, Crisis in Command (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), ix-xi; Gardner, President John F. Kennedy: To Turn the Tide, 60-61; and U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations, 19-24, 59-61.

99. Doughty, Evolution of U.S. Tactical Doctrine 1946-1976, 25-29.

100. Doughty, Evolution of U.S. Tactical Doctrine 1946-1976, 25-29.

101. Doughty, Evolution of U.S. Tactical Doctrine 1946-1976, 25-29.

102. Interview with Professor Richard Swain.

103. Doughty, Evolution of U.S. Tactical Doctrine 1946-1976, 26-40.

104. Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: A History (New York: The Viking Press, 1983), 523; Interview with Huba Wass de Czege; and U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 2-4 through 3-2. It is interesting to note that a similar example using the absence of communications was used by General Starry in 1981 to illustrate the need for incorporating commander's intent into the 1982 version of FM 100-5.

105. Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier, The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 64.

106. Doughty, Evolution of U.S. Tactical Doctrine 1946-1976, 39-46; Romjue et al, Prepare the Army for War: A Historical Overview of the Army Training and Doctrine Command, 51-52; Morris J. Brady, "Special Readiness Study Group: Analysis of Combat Data-1973 Mideast War (SECRET)" (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, July 1974), F-12; Edwards, "Reforming the Army: The Formulation and Implementation of Airland Battle 2000," v; and Donn A. Starry, "To Change an Army," Military Review 63 (March 1983): 21-22.

107. U.S. Army, "FM 100-5: Operations (Test)" (Fort Monroe, Va.: Training and Doctrine Command, 1974), 1-14 through 1-15; Doughty, Evolution of U.S. Tactical Doctrine, 1, 46; Paul H. Herbert, Deciding What Has to Be Done: General DePuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5 (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: Combat Studies Institute, 1988), 1, 106; Huba Wass de Czege and L.D. Holder, "The New FM 100-5," Military Review 62 (July 1982): 55; DePuy, "Concepts of Operation: Heart of Command, Tool of Doctrine," 26-27; and U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 1-5, 3-1 through 3-2.

108. Herbert, Deciding What Has to be Done, 106; Wass de Czege and Holder, "The New FM 100-5," 69; James H. Willbanks, "Airland Battle Tactical Command and Control: Reducing the Need to Communicate Electronically in the Command and Control of Combat Operations at the Tactical Level" (Masters Thesis: Command and General Staff College, 1984), 13; U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), 2-7; John L. Romjue, From Active Defense to Airland Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine 1973-1982 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 58, 68; Edwards, "Reforming the Army: The Formulation and Implementation of Airland Battle 2000," 87; Alvin and Heidi Toffler, War and Anti-War (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1993), 55; and L.D. Holder, "Concept of Operation: See Ops Overlay," Military Review 70 (August 1990): 28.

109. Herbert, Deciding What Has to be Done, 103-107; Interview with Huba Wass de Czege; U.S. Army, FM 101-5: Staff Officer's Field Manual: Staff Organization and Procedures, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), 6-2 through 6-9, 7-4, H-29, & H132-133.

110. Romjue, From Active Defense to Airland Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine 1973-1982, 43; Interview with Huba Wass de Czege.

111. U.S. Army, "FM 100-5: Operations (Final Draft)" (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: Command and General Staff College, 1982), 2-16 through 2-18.

112. Interview with Huba Wass de Czege; U.S. Army, "FM 100-5: Operations (Final Draft)", 2-16 through 2-18; "The German Army's Mission Orders," Armor 90 (January/February 1981): 12-13; and Robert Tezza, 'Working Notes.' General Starry moved from TRADOC to Readiness Command before the publication of FM 100-5. His departure, coupled with the arrival of key senior officers that did not share his views about decentralization, probably account for the differences between the Wass de Czege draft and the final manual. LTC Robert Tezza of the Command and General Staff College's Center for Army Tactics has done an in depth study of commander's intent. It was his hard work and study that brought to light the similarities between the German Army's doctrine in HDV100/200 and the draft of FM 100-5. Without his work, this crucial bit of information, which clearly shows the definite link between U.S. and German doctrine, would not have been possible.

113. William R. Richardson, "FM 100-5: The Airland Battle of 1986," Military Review 66 (March 1986): 11; Wayne M. Hall, "A Theoretical Perspective on Airland Battle Doctrine," Military Review 66 (March 1986): 34.

114. Leroy R. Goff, III., "A Study of Intent," (Military Studies Program Paper: U.S. Army War College, 1987), 3-8; U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986), 3-4; and John M. Vermillion, "Tactical Implication of the Adoption of Auftragstaktik on the Airland Battlefield, (Masters Monograph: Command and General Staff College, 1985), 1-7.

115. Alvin and Heidi Toffler, War and Anti-War, 55; Gene C. Kamena, "Mission Orders: Is Intent the Answer," (Masters Thesis: Command and General Staff College, 1992), 6-7; U.S. Army, FM 100-5: Operations, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), 6-6; and The Training and Doctrine Command, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5: Force XXI Operations, (Fort Monroe, Va.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994), 3-5. While the 1993 FM 100-5 is new, it bears a striking similarity to its 1962 predecessor. The 1962 version's

chapter, 'Operations Short of War,' is remarkably like the current 'Operations Other Than War.'

116. For a discussion of the difference between conceptual thinking versus concrete thinking in the Army see J.S. Patterson, "CAS3: Today's Investment in Our Army's Future," Military Review 74 (May 1994): 24-28.

117. Karl von Clausewitz, On War, Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). In his book, Clausewitz often refers to the phenomena of friction as being an ever present part of war. One could argue that over time, the American Army has attempted to control or influence friction, while the Germans have always seen it as a dynamic that was uncontrollable, so one should "expect the unexpected." The other reason for conveying intentions could be that the tactical commander could no longer control their soldiers by direct observation.

118. Michael R. Rampy, "The Keystone Doctrine: FM 100-5, Operations," Military Review, 74 (June 1994): 16-17.

119. Edwards, "Reforming the Army: The Formulation and Implementation of Airland Battle 2000," v.

120. COL Peter Durant, British Army Liaison to the Command and General Staff College, when asked the origin of commander's intent in British doctrine, told the author that it was derived from FM 100-5. He had no idea that the concept had been in British doctrine before World War II.

121. While the technology predicted for the future may bring a return of the "Big Squad Leader in the Sky," the potential for failures and the subsequent isolation of units on the battlefield is exacerbated by the infusion of technology.

122. Both Professor Spiller and Professor Swain have said that history for most Army officers begins the day they are sworn into the Army. The evidence of this research supports their premise.

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